

REMARKS

Summary

Amended independent Claim 11 recites at least one feature not understood to be disclosed or suggested by the Kari patent. Therefore, the application is now in allowable form.

Status of the Claims

Claim 11 is pending. Claim 12 has been canceled without prejudice. Claim 11 has been amended herein.

Requested Action

Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw the outstanding rejection in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Applicants also respectfully request that this Amendment After Final be entered. This Amendment was not presented earlier as it was earnestly believed that the claims on file would be found allowable. Given the Examiner's familiarity with the application, Applicants believe that a full understanding and consideration of this Amendment would not require undue time or effort by the Examiner. Moreover, Applicants submit that this Amendment places the application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment is believed to be appropriate and such entry is respectfully requested.

Substantive Rejection

The cover page acknowledges that Claims 11 and 12 remain in the case, but page 2 of the Office Action states that “Claims X are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), as being anticipated by the patent to Kari (U.S. Patent No. 6,685,025)”. Therefore, Applicants’ representative telephoned the Examiner to clarify the rejection. The Examiner confirmed that Claims 11 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), as being anticipated by the patent to Kari (U.S. Patent No. 6,685,025).

Response to Rejection

In response, while not conceding the propriety of the rejection, Claim 11 has been amended herein and Claim 12 has been canceled without prejudice. Support for the amendments can be found in the specification at least at page 38, line 17 to page 39, line 1. Applicants submit that as amended, Claim 11 is allowable over the Kari patent for the following reasons.

Amended independent Claim 11 relates to an end member of a developing member for rotatably supporting one end of a developing roller of a process cartridge detachable with respect to an image forming apparatus. The apparatus comprises a sliding portion configured and positioned to rotatably support one end of the developing roller, a plurality of receiving portions which are disposed at positions different from the sliding portion and are supported by an end member adjacent to the lower side of the end member when a plurality of end members are stacked in a vertical direction, and a plurality of abutment portions which are disposed at positions different from the sliding portion and support an end member adjacent to the upper side

of the end member when a plurality of end members are stacked in the vertical direction. The distance between one of the abutment portions and a corresponding one of the receiving portions is substantially the same for any pair of one abutment portion and a corresponding receiving portion.

Claim 11 has been amended to recite a first overlap portion that projects from an upper side of the end member and overlaps with a second overlap portion of the end member adjacent to the upper side of the end member when a plurality of end members are stacked in the vertical direction. Claim 11 has also been amended to recite a second overlap portion that overlaps with a first overlap portion projecting from an upper side of the end member adjacent to the lower side of the end member when a plurality of end members are stacked in the vertical direction. In addition, the sliding portion does not come into contact with the end member adjacent the upper side of the end member and the end member adjacent the lower side of the end member when a plurality of end members are stacked in the vertical direction.

By this arrangement, it is possible to reduce the spatial configuration occupied by stacked end members. One non-limiting example of how this structure results in a compact design for stacked end members is shown in the attached annotated sketch.

In contrast, the patent to Kari is not understood to disclose or suggest a first overlap portion that projects from an upper side of the end member and overlaps with a second overlap portion of the end member adjacent to the upper side of the end member when a plurality of end members are stacked in the vertical direction, and a second overlap portion that overlaps with a first overlap portion projecting from an upper side of the end member adjacent to the lower side

of the end member when a plurality of end members are stacked in the vertical direction, as recited by amended Claim 11.

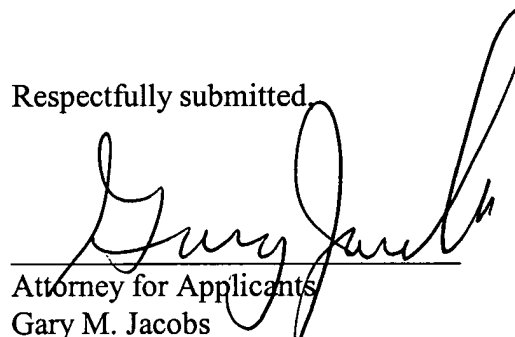
Therefore, Applicants submit that Claim 11 is allowable over the cited art.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, the application is now in allowable form. Therefore, early passage to issue is respectfully solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

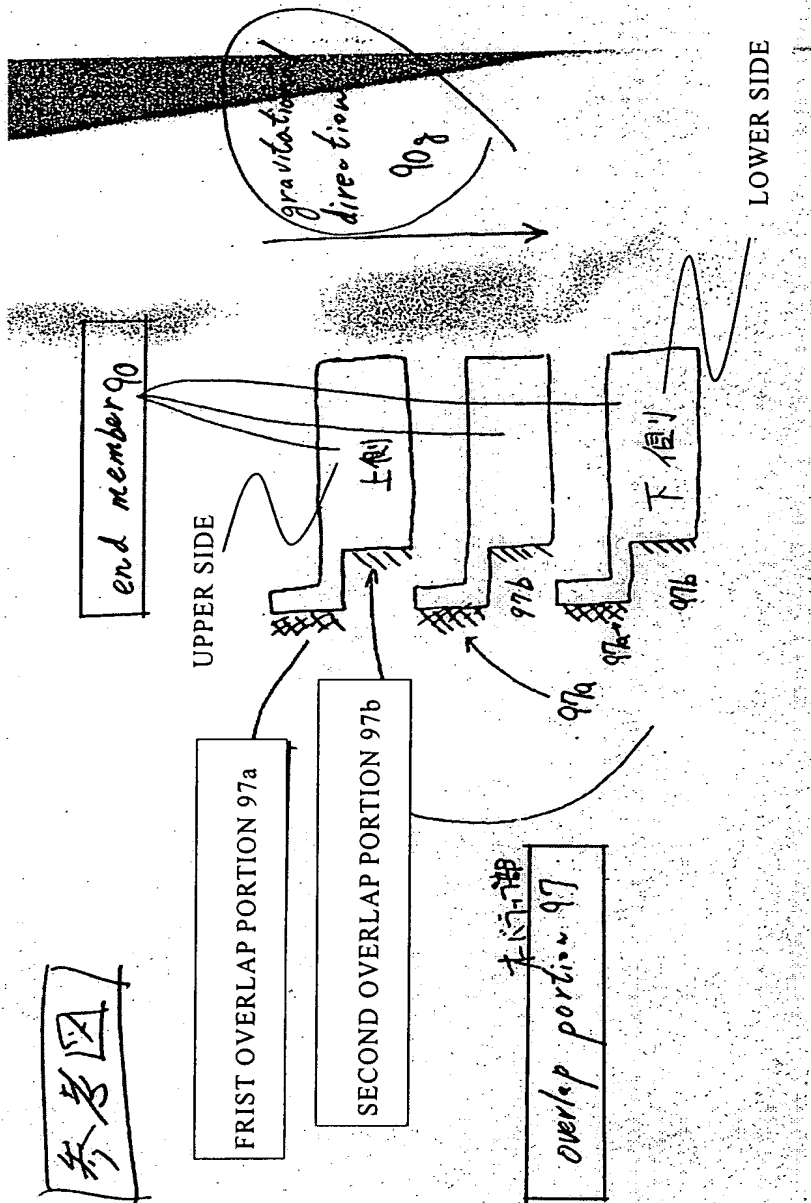
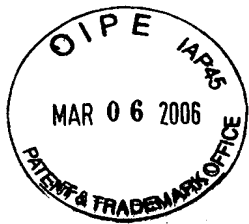
Respectfully submitted,



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an overlap portion (97a) that is a portion projecting in an upper side and overlaps with an overlap portion (97b) of the end member adjacent (90) to the upper side of said end member when a plurality of end members (90) are stacked in the vertical direction; and

an overlap portion (97b) that overlaps with an overlap portion (97a) projecting in an upper side of the end member (90) adjacent to the lower side of said end member when a plurality of end members are stacked in the vertical direction,